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EVALUATING ATTITUDES.

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ABILITY GROUPING MAY PRODUCE NEGATIVE SCHOOL AND LEARNING ATTITUDES AND LESSEN THE MOTIVATION OF ABLE STUDENTS. THIS PROBABILITY IS SUPPORTED BY THE RESULTS OF A FOUR-YEAR PROJECT DESIGNED TO IMPROVE A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAM THROUGH THE USE OF TEAM TEACHING TECHNIQUES AND A FLEXIBLE GROUPING ARRANGEMENT. THE EFFECTS OF THE PROGRAM WERE STUDIED USING THE TRADITIONAL CRITERIA OF STANDARDIZED ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES AND TEACHER OPINIONS. IN ADDITION, THE INVESTIGATORS USED A MOTIVATION INVENTORY DEVELOPED BY FRYMIER (1962) AND A SEVEN-SCORE ATTITUDE INVENTORY DEVELOPED BY ZWEIBELSON (1965). ACHIEVEMENT TEST SCORES SHOWED NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE HETEROGENEOUS EXPERIMENTAL GROUP OF TEAM TAUGHT STUDENTS AND THE HOMOGENEOUS CONTROL GROUP OF TRADITIONALLY TAUGHT STUDENTS. STUDENTS GROUPED IN HIGH ABILITY TRACKS TENDED TO HAVE MORE NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SCHOOL AND LEARNING AND TO EXPRESS LOWER MOTIVATION THAN LOW ABILITY GROUPS. SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER ATTITUDES WERE DEVELOPED BY TEAM TAUGHT STUDENTS. THE INVESTIGATORS' RESULTS SUGGEST THAT TEAM TEACHING AND FLEXIBLE GROUPING HELP TO IMPROVE ATTITUDES WITH NO ADVERSE EFFECT OF ACHIEVEMENT. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED TO A SYMPOSIUM OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (WASHINGTON, SEPTEMBER 2, 1967). (BB)

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Professionals developing changes in instructional and grouping procedures in education have typically used subjective staff judgments and standardized achievement test scores to study effects. School performance and teacher opinions have tended to be the most widely used criteria for determining the educational value of programs which depart from the traditional pattern. Ability grouping for example, has been assumed to be an effective and efficient way to separate students for school instruction. The single instructor in a fixed relationship with a given number of students continues to be the standard instructional practice throughout the country. In Washington, D.C. the possible psychological and social disadvantages of grouping students for instruction according to ability, has brought community action for change.

Ability grouping methods (and other educational practices) have been initiated with little evidence to show that students grouped according to intelligence actually become better informed, or make gains in understanding, motivation or improved attitudes.

The present report summarizes the major findings of a 4 year project designed to improve a junior high school

social studies program. The project was essentially an attempt to improve an instructional program through the use of team teaching techniques and also to provide better integration of classes by means of a flexible grouping arrangement. In addition to an evaluation of the achievement scores of an experimental group versus a control group, the investigators studied students' responses to an attitude and a motivation inventory.

It seemed quite logical to assume that knowledge of the effects of educational changes on student attitudes and motivation could provide important supplementary information to add to test performance and teacher opinion data. Previous reports by Zweibelson (1965) (1967) described the attitude inventory, the pre- and post- experimental achievement test differences and gave the student motivation inventory results. These reports as well as the present summary of the four year project produced the general conclusions indicated below.

1. The planned team teaching approach provided effective ways of dealing with the problems of ability grouping and integration.

2. Team teaching allowed heterogeneous grouping that was considered by teachers to be

more productive of democratic living.

3. There was no significant difference between the achievement test scores of team taught students compared with traditionally taught students.

4. Students who were grouped in high ability tracks tended to have more negative attitudes towards the school than those in lower ability groups.

5. Students in high ability groups indicated more negative attitudes toward learning.

6. Students in high ability groups responded to the motivation inventory in a pattern that suggests lower motivation.

The findings reported above suggested that ability grouping does not improve the motivation or school and learning attitudes of able junior high school students. These conclusions were based upon analyses of student responses as well as test scores and staff judgment.

THE PROGRAM

A flexible grouping arrangment was established for

the experimental groups at each grade level. For about three-fifths of the time, the pupils were grouped heterogeneously in both large and smaller groups for special presentations (lectures, films, panels, demonstrations, etc.) and discussions. For about two-fifths of the time, they were grouped homogeneously according to the individual needs of students and purposes of instruction, such as remedial help, skill building, enrichment activities, independent individual study and testing.

There were six teams, two for each grade level composed of 100-110 pupils, or a total of 600-660. The teaching schedules were arranged so the teaching teams had the same period free for cooperative planning. The control group was taught in the traditional manner. In other words, it was grouped homogeneously. The criteria for ability placement was an index of group intelligence, reading and arithmetic test scores, as well as the subjective judgment of teachers.

ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

To assess attitudes which affected pupil learning, two instruments were used: a motivation inventory developed by Frymier (1962); and an attitude inventory designed by the principal investigator. The motivation inventory obtained one score.

The attitude inventory obtained seven scores. Seven clusters of items obtained by factor analysis for the attitude scale, developed by Zweibelson and reported in 1965 were:

1. Group-School attitudes
2. Social Studies-School attitudes
3. Personal attitudes
4. Bias toward students
5. Student-School relationships
6. Resistance to learning and change
7. Social resistance.

1964 and 1965 PROJECT RESULTS

A report was submitted in 1964 reporting the results of a study of 9th grade students' performances and attitudes after approximately a one-year exposure to team teaching. It was found that achievement test results of the team-taught and the control groups did not differ, but that significantly better attitudes regarding the school, teachers and social studies were developed by the team-taught students. These findings were supported by the results of the 1965 study for 7th graders and 8th graders after one or two years exposure to team teaching and flexible grouping respectively. In addition, the 1965 study found that the experimental students probably developed better school-student relationship attitudes. Evidence was reported that improvement in bias toward fellow students for the team-taught group after a one year exposure and also improvement in

resistance to learning attitudes was evident for 7th graders. Less social resistance was found for team-taught 8th and 9th graders exposed 2 and 3 years to team teaching respectively. Not all groups studied provided consistent evidence showing changes in attitudes. Variations appeared for different grade levels and combinations of students results, as well as length of exposure to the program.

A motivation inventory was introduced to provide additional evaluative information in the 1965 study. It was found that the motivation score was more related to or affected by ability track placement. Attitudes as well were significantly related to or affected by the ability track placement of students. It was found that able students tended to express lower motivation and more negative attitudes. These results suggested that team teaching and flexible grouping helped to improve attitudes with no adverse effect on achievement for 7th and 8th graders exposed for one or two years. The results supported the probability that homogeneous grouping may produce negative attitudes and lessen the motivation of able students.

DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

Each student was given an identification code number which was key punched on a data card as well as Mark Sense type response cards. The students were told not to put their names on their response cards, but to answer each item honestly because we were interested in what students felt as a group, and were not concerned with giving them individual scores. The questions were read to the students by the teachers. The students recorded their responses on the inventory response cards.

There were four possible response choices for each question, two positive and two negative. The two positive responses were "strongly agree" and "agree" and the negative responses were "strongly disagree" and "disagree." The pattern of statements used to elicit responses avoided allowing a neutral or "I don't know" answer. This type of forced choice statement was planned in order to prevent avoidance of controversial statements. There were no apparent difficulties in either the administration of the questionnaire or in the use of the inventory response cards. The use of these cards enabled us to have the items analyzed by machine with a minimum amount of clerical detail.

The data punch card contained the student's code number, year of graduation from high school, sex, ability track, and the grades in which he participated in the team teaching program, if any (for example: grades 7 and 9; or 7, 8 and 9, etc.). The data punch cards were then matched with each student's response cards and processed by computer.

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